

Did Watt disdain a patent for his improvements in the steam-engine, which have effected the most wonderful, the most rapid, and most radical revolution in the position of men that ever occurred, lifting them from the state of mere brute bawlers of wood and drawers of water into that of educated directors of an obedient and all-powerful servant?

Did Stephenson neglect to secure advantages by patent to himself from his invention of the locomotive engine? Have not Messrs. Cooke and Wheatstone, and Mr. Bain, sought to be protected in the exercise of their several inventions of the modes of applying electric currents to the communication of intelligence, by their action in deflecting the needle, or in the decomposition of certain chemical compounds, from the working of which, under monopolies secured by patents, Mr. Ricardo is endeavouring to realise something handsome, as would appear by the charges of the Electric Telegraph Company, of which he is chairman? And, lastly, did not Sir Marc Isambard Brunel patent his most important mechanical inventions?

We might go on citing fresh examples, and accumulating evidence *ad infinitum*, that what are termed great inventions, have been, with scarcely an exception, patented.

As regards what Mr. Ricardo designates petty inventions, we confess that we are surprised that he, bearing a name known and honoured as that of one who did so much for the elucidation of the true principles of political economy, should be so unconscious of the importance of "petty inventions" as may be fairly implied from the disparaging manner in which he spoke of them. Would he have us suppose that he considers the invention of a process or apparatus which effects the cheapening or improvement of an article consumed by the million, to be of little or no moment? Surely he cannot be ignorant of this first principle of political economy,—that reduced cost increases the demand, consequently the supply, and therefore the employment of persons engaged in that particular branch of manufacture or trade.

We have been induced to dwell thus long upon the justice and necessity of patent laws, as being the best means of promoting inventions by rewarding inventors with the grant, for a comparatively very brief period, of the profits accruing from their inventions, because we believe great efforts will be made next session, if not for the abrogation of all protection to intellectual property, at least to render the law under which it is to be obtained as ineffectual as possible. It has been, and no doubt will be, during the recess, industriously circulated that all monopolies are injurious to the general interest of the commonwealth, and that the wisest and most beneficial plan would be for the state to reward the inventor and throw his invention open to the world. This is another dogma of Communism, which inculcates the duty of the state to do every thing; and is as disagreeable to the ideas of Englishmen as it is impracticable. Who can determine the merit and worth of an invention? Was not Solomon de Caus doomed to wearisome imprisonment in the cell of Bicêtre, and treated as a madman, for his crude invention of the steam engine? What estimate did Napoleon form of Fulton's steam ship? or did poor Gray, the projector of railroads, find the public such generous paymasters to those that serve them? Instances of merit unappreciated and unrewarded so abound at every turn in the history of all nations, and also of the gross acts of injustice which men collectively perpetrate, but which, individually, they would blush at, that no one, after a little reflection, could fail being convinced of the folly and unfairness of this scheme.

Nor is the proposed attack to be limited, we fear, to patentable inventions alone. It has been openly suggested, and may be again for aught we know, to abolish copyright, and to give authors a Government grant, or pension, instead. We therefore think that all who live by the exercise of their intellect, spinning out the fibres of their brains,—artists, writers, sculptors, inventors, and designers, should be up and stirring in the matter; they use their best endeavours to secure for them-

selves and for those who may come after them, a wise system of legislation for the protection of their property in the works of their imaginations, and to insure that the protection may be cheaply and speedily obtained, and that it may be efficient. In short, that men of the class alluded to may have their property as well secured to them as are the paternal acres to Lord Normanrobber, or personal property to any banker, merchant, trader, or other.

To remedy the great inconvenience and serious injury which the postponement of the Patent Law Amendment Bill will inflict upon the public generally, and especially those who, trusting to the faith of Government, have exhibited their inventions in the Crystal Palace, we suggest that active steps should be immediately taken to obtain, by an order in council, a prolongation and extension of the powers of the recent Act for the Provisional Registration of Inventions.

According to this Act, which expires in May, protection may be obtained till that time for an invention, by the deposit of a model thereof in any building named by the Board of Trade for that purpose, without, however, the acquisition of any right to work the invention as under a patent. We propose to extend the duration of the Act six or twelve months longer, in order to give ample time for the framing and passing of a well-considered and digested system of Patent Law Reform, and to accord protection for that period to inventions on the deposit of models or working drawings, and descriptions thereof, in the Designs Registration Office, Somerset-house; also to extend the protection to depositors so as to enable them to "make, use, exercise, or vend their said inventions" for the term expressed, within the three kingdoms and colonies; and further to provide, when the future Patent Law Amendment Bill shall have passed, for powers to the commissioners or parties entrusted with its administration, to grant patents for all inventions that have been protected under the Provisional Registration Act, and which patents should bear date from the time when the provisional registration was effected. The fee in this case may be small, 5*l.* for instance, and would suffice to defray the additional expense in the shape of wages to clerks, which would be caused by increased business in the Designs Office, where, fortunately, the whole of the machinery for carrying out an Act of this nature is ready at hand, and thoroughly organised.

The operation of this short Act would, doubtless, afford several useful suggestions which it would be well to consider in framing the future Bill, and would determine the question whether cheap patents, in the first cost, are injurious. It would, also, we presume, quicken the zeal of the law officers of the Crown by showing that no great public injury would result from dispensing with their services in these matters altogether; and, by reason of the pecuniary loss it would cause, might be considered by some as meet punishment for their neglect of as important a measure of reform as has ever been entrusted to the care of any one for years past. For we confidently believe, and unhesitatingly assert, that had Sir Alexander Cockburn resisted all attempts to destroy the integrity of the measure, or even had Lord Lansdowne and Lord Minto suggested the sinking of the dignity of the House of Peers for the occasion, and insisted on dividing on the motion of Lord Montagu, the Patent Law Amendment Bill would, by this time, have been passed, and been hailed by the inventive genius of the country as, so far as it went, a salutary act of justice, and by the manufacturing interests as one of wisdom and necessity. That such is the opinion of the public there can be little doubt, and we believe the verdict of any twelve good and true men, empanelled on a jury, would be, on hearing a statement of the birth, nurture, and death of the late proposed Bill,—“Died through culpable and wanton neglect by its promoters.”

IRON PAVEMENT.—An ironfounder at Glasgow has patented ridged and furrowed cast-iron plates for pavement.

A HINT TO ECCLESIOLOGICAL CRITICS.

EXAMPLE BETTER THAN PRECEPT.

WITH your permission I will address to you a few observations having reference to the letter of "An Old Professor," in your last week's publication. My object is not to question whether the castigation be given some of the young architects of Bristol be well merited or not, but to suggest as probable what occurred to my own mind on perusing his very sensible observations, having as I had fresh in memory a precisely similar case, and one open also to the same strictures, enacted by certain members of his own society on their recent visit to Bristol.

I allude particularly to the manner in which the subject of the Bridgewater Church "renovation," if this must be the word, was introduced, and not only encouraged, but positively enlarged upon also by the chairman in a tone, and under circumstances, most discreditable to himself.—May not this then have furnished the example, as well as the encouragement to these youngsters to express themselves without reserve upon certain passages of Professor Willis's paper, complained of by "An Old Professor?" I am inclined myself to think so, and to observe moreover that if these societies so far forget themselves as openly to attack the works of the professional man, who cannot go with them to the same excess of "superstitious veneration for ancient forms and objects merely because they are ancient," it can scarcely be wondered at that these lads, who look forward to the time when they will be themselves members of this truly noble profession, should have been guilty of expressing their disrespect, it may be indiscriminately, for the opinions of the members of a society who countenance these attacks.

I would therefore in all kindness recommend the young unprofessional members of Archaeological Societies to be somewhat more modest in their deportment and reserved in the expression of their opinions on the mode adopted by an architect in carrying out the renovation or enlargement of our ancient buildings; and believe that it is just possible that they may be wrong in their impressions, and otherwise mistaken in their conclusions, in paying only a hasty visit to and making but a superficial survey of work in a half-finished state.

The architect of the works in question has to thank you, Mr. Editor, for extending to him your usual gentlemanly feeling and consideration for his good name, by suppressing all mention of this matter in your notice of the proceedings of the Archaeological Institute.

W. H. B.

INCREASE OF BUILDINGS.

THE increase of buildings in Great Britain will doubtless be a subject of much interest and importance to the readers of THE BUILDER. While the present paper points out to the curious those districts in which building has increased rapidly, it at the same time directs the attention of the speculator to those which, either from increase of population or the value of house room, would be likely to prove the best speculation for building.

In the present paper it is intended to show the increase of buildings in London during the last ten years.

The census return which has just been presented to the Houses of Parliament, forms a valuable collection of facts on this point.

In comparing the number of houses in 1841 with those in 1851, to be enabled to form fair and general inferences, due regard must be had to the number of uninhabited houses, as well as to the number building.

The following tables show the number of inhabited houses, the number uninhabited, and those building, as enumerated on the 7th of June, 1841, and the 31st of March, 1851.